

Event Waste Reduction

Best Practices





Event Waste Reduction Best Practices

This summary includes tips and tricks from event organizers in Franklin County, Ohio who have worked with SWACO to implement recycling or composting at their events. These suggestions may prove applicable to community events outside of central Ohio.

Basic Ingredients for Success

OVER-COMMUNICATE

Streamline communication with vendors and haulers via regular check-ins.

- Use in-person communication to discuss waste reduction goals and contracts with vendors and haulers. Don't just send emails- it won't save time in the long run!
- Waste reduction planning should start at the beginning of the event planning process.

Explicitly require haulers to provide recycling and disposal data from the event.



- Review data to right-size operations next year and share waste reduction successes.

Educate volunteers before and during event about how to properly set up waste containers, what color bags go in each container and how often bags should be removed from stations and deposited into dumpsters.

Ensure volunteers know which dumpster accepts the recyclables and landfill materials. Labeling dumpsters with clear signage on what's accepted is helpful to volunteers.

- For example, consider if volunteers should be checking bins once an hour or pulling full containers as necessary. A pro-tip is to pull the bag when it's ¾ full to avoid overflow and ensure it can be tie off easily.

Educate attendees before and during an event about how to reduce, reuse, and recycle.

- For example, encourage attendees to bring their own water bottles or reusable utensils in confirmation email or on the event webpage and social media.

Highlight waste reduction efforts on marketing materials before and during the event.

Engage staff in waste reduction planning and goal setting to increase personal investment.

Share your sustainability successes via news releases, e-newsletters, social media, and more.

- Tag us for social media love!

 @SWACOGreen

 /SWACO.org

 @swaco_green

Share waste reduction achievements with your team of volunteers and staff.

Ensure they know these efforts would not have been possible without their help.

WASTE REDUCTION STATIONS

Create consistent color-coded bins and sorting signage at waste stations.

- Blue symbolizes recycling, green for compost, and gray/black for landfill. Recycling bags should be clear, compost bags should be BPI certified compostable which are green, and landfill bags should be black. Different color bags will ensure materials get to the proper disposal location.
- Utilize high visibility banners, flags, or signs to indicate waste reduction stations.



Map out your venue/space and plan strategic placement of waste reduction stations based on projected people and material flow. Stations should be placed every 30-40 yards.

- Consider how many attendees are expected to be at the event during peak attendance. Don't use the total calculation of projected attendance for the duration of the event.
 - 0 - 1,000 attendees: 10 complete stations (coupled containers)
 - 1,000 - 5,000 attendees: 20 stations
 - 5,000 - 10,000 attendees: 30 stations
 - 10,000 - 20,000 attendees: 40 stations
 - 20,000 - 30,000 attendees: 50 stations
 - 30,000+: Ensure stations every 30-40 yards
- Provide an efficient system for recycling cardboard from vendors throughout the event. Encourage vendors to break down boxes to save space in dumpsters.

Ensure recycling and trash bins are always grouped. Solo bins are more highly contaminated.

Provide recycling bins during set-up for vendors and exhibitors.

Offer and market water bottle refilling areas.

Donate leftover food to local organizations such as **Columbus Food Rescue** and/or staff and volunteers.

Pro tip: Before considering the addition of composting to your event, focus on creating a successful recycling program achieving high diversion with low contamination.

PREP CLEAN-UP CREW

Train staff (internal or hired) and volunteers prior to the event and provide a refresher right before it starts on the following topics:

- What's accepted for recycling and general waste reduction efforts.
- Method for safely collecting litter.
- Verify with your waste hauler how recyclable materials should be placed in the dumpsters. For example, some haulers accept bagged recyclables, and some prefer that recyclables are kept loose.
- Empowering strategies to engage/educate guests and monitor bins.

EVENT WASTE REDUCTION BEST PRACTICES



Create a detailed set-up, pick-up, and tear-down schedule for waste reduction stations and roll-offs. Ensure prompt removal after the event to reduce contamination.

- Give vendors easy access to recycling and Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) roll-offs and/or schedule waste pick-ups on demand and at certain times.
- Consider collecting cardboard from vendors before the event starts. Allow vendors to place flattened cardboard behind their station for easy collection.
- Establish a feedback system for reporting and addressing full bins (i.e. text message).



Recruit more assistants than needed to ensure cancellations don't jeopardize success.

If funding permits, contract with a clean-up team committed to waste reduction.

SWAP IT OUT

Use washable hand stamps instead of wrist bands to show proof of payment or age.

Opt for reusable name tags instead of stickers.

- Collect the reusable name tag holders on the way out!

Transform your guide into a digital format to save financial and natural resources.

For food events, consider providing each guest with a reusable branded spork instead of handing out disposable utensils. Attach a note to the spork explaining it's reusable.

Provide reusable tasting cups that serve as promo items instead of disposable cups.

- If you have to use a disposable cup, choose a clear plastic cup or paper cup as both of those are recyclable in Franklin County. See the full of list of what's accepted for recycling [here](#).

Strategies for Increased Impact:

Include waste reduction as a contractual requirement for vendors. (see pg. 7)

- Co-creating a flexible contract with your vendors may increase buy-in.
- If mandates aren't feasible for your event, consider developing one-time incentives for vendor participation.
- Note: Historically, voluntary participation has been low for many central Ohio events.

Display an infographic-style flyer on food truck/stands showing proper sorting for their specific service ware.

Offer preferred booth/food truck placement or reduced fees to vendors who minimize unnecessary packaging or use only recyclable products.

Inspiration from Grant Recipients:



PELTONIA OPENING CEREMONY

Pelotonia utilized SWACO's grant funding at their opening ceremony, which consisted of more than 10,000 people. The grant helped Pelotonia implement successful waste diversion by adding a variety of waste stream disposal stations in multiple locations around the event site. Pelotonia set up waste station that featured three disposal options: landfill, recycle, and compost.

OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP SUMMER FESTIVAL

Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Grove City used SWACO grant dollars to implement zero waste activities at their annual summer parish festival. Activities focused on source reduction with vendors, pre- and post-consumer recycling, and pre- and post-consumer food scrap composting.

DUBLIN IRISH FESTIVAL

More than 100,000 people attend the Dublin Irish Festival each year. With grant funding from SWACO, the festival was able to double the amount of recyclable materials collected with the purchase of reusable containers, hire Zero Waste Event Productions to sort materials to ensure a cleaner stream of recyclables and compostables were captured, and provide water refilling stations to visitors reducing the amount of disposable plastic water bottles generated.

Additional Resources:

EXAMPLE CONTRACTUAL REQUIREMENTS FOR VENDORS

Contract language is a critical piece of expectation setting and helps ensure stakeholders are on the same page. Working with vendors and haulers to maximize the number of materials distributed that are reusable or recyclable will make your job easier. Make sure you know what is accepted for recycling in Franklin County before communicating requirements to service providers (see image below). Consider adding these requirements to your contracts, as appropriate:

VENDORS:

- No Polystyrene/Styrofoam
- Break down and recycle cardboard
- Do not relocate bins without prior approval
- Swap plastic cups for reusable or paper cups
- Make napkins available upon request only
- Offer bulk condiment dispensers
- 'Leave no trace' after the event
- Require participation in diversion programs (i.e. recycling, compost)

HAULERS:

- Label roll-offs (RECYCLE/TRASH)
- Share recycling/disposal receipts and locations
- Timely removal of roll-offs

Recycle			Recycle Right MAKE A DIFFERENCE		Not Accepted	
 <p>Paper & Cardboard <i>Please flatten</i></p>	 <p>Plastic Bottles & Containers <i>Lids accepted; remove straws</i></p>	 <p>Glass Bottles & Jars <i>All colors accepted</i></p>	 <p>Plastic Bags, Wrap or Film</p>	 <p>Batteries, Propane Tanks or Other Flammables</p>		
 <p>Metal Cans & Cups <i>Remove aerosol tips</i></p>	 <p>Cartons <i>Rinse and remove lids</i></p>	 <p>Don't Bag Recyclables <i>Keep them loose</i></p>	 <p>Tangles <i>Hoses, wires, chains, clothing or electronics</i></p>	 <p>Foam <i>Cups, plates and food containers</i></p>		

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR VENDORS AND CATERERS ADAPTED FROM OEPA GUIDE

1. What items will be served or are available for guests?
2. How are the items packaged?
3. Can you provide reusable service ware (i.e. tablecloths, silverware, glasses, mugs, plates and cloth napkins that can be washed and reused)?
4. If not, will you provide recyclable or compostable items?

Note: Only some plastic cups are accepted for recycling. Plastic utensils and plates are not accepted. If compostable products are being considered, look for BPI certified compostable or ASTM D6400 certifications.

BE PREPARED TO ANSWER BASIC QUESTIONS FOR HAULERS:


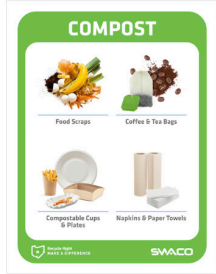




- When will roll-offs/dumpsters need taken off site?
- How many times will roll-offs need emptied throughout the event and at what times?
- Where will the roll-offs be located? (Provide a map if possible.)

PUBLIC-FACING WASTE REDUCTION STATION SIGNAGE

- Locate highly visual and colorful signs at eye-level.
- Correlate with service ware used at the event (i.e. signs include photos of items at the event).
- Consistently color-code signs to match bins (blue for recycling, black for landfill, green for compost).
- Weather and wind-proof signs to enable reuse.
- Connect sorting signs to waste bins on the lid or at eye level above the bin. Don't place the signs below the lid as most people won't see the sign.

CREATE YOUR OWN SIGN

Click the layouts below to start creating your own sign.
A maximum of six materials can be added to each layout.

RECYCLE	COMPOST	LANDFILL
 <p>8.5"x11"</p>	 <p>8.5"x11"</p>	 <p>8.5"x11"</p>
 <p>11"x17"</p>	 <p>11"x17"</p>	 <p>11"x17"</p>

SWACO has a FREE Sign Maker Tool available on [RecycleRight.org](https://www.RecycleRight.org). There are pre-made signs available and customizable signs.



ANY QUESTIONS?

Thank you for your dedication to waste reduction. Reach out to our team to learn more about the SWACO grant programs and event waste reduction technical assistance. Feel free to share this document.

Event Waste Reduction Grant Program Information:

<http://www.swaco.org/188/Grants>

Event Container Loan Program Information:

<https://www.swaco.org/192/Event-Container-Loan-Program>

Event Waste Reduction Webinars:

<http://www.swaco.org/311/Webinars>